What are some causes for Under-nutrition in children?

- **Too much Juice:** Too much juice in the diet often replaces milk and other important foods because children become too full. Juices often contain more sugar and less vitamins than fresh, canned, or frozen fruits.

- **Low-fat diets:** Some parents become concerned about heart disease and obesity and may decide to offer their children only non-fat or low-fat food products such as skim milk, or they may decide to reduce calories. It is recommended that kids under 2 years of age not be put on a low-fat diet or eating plan as they need adequate fat for growth and brain development. Fat is important for storing energy, protecting and insulating the body and absorbing fat-soluble vitamins in the body.

- **No breakfast:** Children who skip breakfast eat less calories and nutrients than those children who eat breakfast. If there is little time for preparing breakfast, choose foods that are easily prepared or are ready-to-eat such as yogurt, fruit bars, milk and leftovers.

***For mild malnutrition: parents need to work on ways to increase the toddler’s oral intake of both nutrient dense and energy dense foods***

**What makes a food nutrient dense?** A food is nutrient dense if the vitamin and mineral content is more than its energy or calorie content such as lean meats, beans, oranges, carrots, broccoli, whole-wheat bread, and whole-grain breakfast cereals.

**Energy dense** foods contribute more calories than they do nutrients such as chips, sodas, cookies and ice cream. Remember to balance healthy nutrient dense foods with energy dense foods. Here are some examples of weight gain strategies:

- Provide small frequent meals with nutrient dense foods and energy dense foods and drinks.
- Add fat to foods such as margarine on mashed potatoes and toast, mayonnaise and cheese on sandwiches.
- Offer whole (not reduced) fat products such as whole milk, cottage cheese, cheese, creamed soups, pudding and yogurt.
- Add calories to foods such as canned fruit in heavy syrup and vegetables with cheese sauce.

***For moderate to severe malnutrition: refer, then help parents adhere to the prescribed medical and dietary regime***